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DIRECT EDITION

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PAUL JENKINS

RAMON BACHS

STEVE LEIBER

KEI KOBAYASHI

CALVARY CEMETERY, QUEENS
KRAKOOM
JOHN FERNANDEZ WAS ONE OF US.
A NEWSMAN.

MAYBE A CUT ABOVE, I DON'T KNOW. ALL I KNOW IS THAT THE LAST TIME I SAW JOHNNY WAS EIGHT DAYS AGO, COMING OUT THE BACK OF O'FLANAGAN'S, MAYBE ABOUT NINE OR TEN AT NIGHT.
HE WAS PRETTY GIDDY. KNOWING HIM, THAT WAS PROBABLY DUE TO THE GUINNESS. HE TOLD ME HE'D JUST GOTTEN FULL-TIME WORK WITH THE NEW WARRIORS REALITY SHOW.
I WISHED HIM LUCK AND TOLD HIM TO BE CAREFUL.
"JOHNNY HAD BEEN ON AT LEAST FOUR TOURS OF BOSNIA, THREE TO AFGHANISTAN AND MAYBE EIGHT OR NINE TO BAGHDAD WITH CNN.
"LAST YEAR, HE WON AN EMMY NOMINATION FOR HIS BIT ON THE U.S.S. ABRAHAM LINCOLN. AND FROM THERE, HE GRADUATED TO THIS ASSIGNMENT. THIS WAS HIS BIG BREAK.
"HE USED TO SAY ALL THE TIMES HE'D BEEN BOMBED OR SHOT AT WERE JUST PRACTICE RUNS FOR THE REAL THING.
"BUT HE ALWAYS WAS CAREFUL. AND HE ALWAYS FIGURED HE'D SEE IT COMING.
BOOM!
"THE TRUTH IS, YOU NEVER SEE IT COMING."

...HOW'S THE WRIST HEALING?
BETTER THAN THE RIBS. IT'S LIKE THEY NEVER GO AWAY.
Heinegen black
I'M STILL WAITING. HOW'S WORK?
WORSE THAN BROKEN RIBS.
OH, YEAH... I BROKE A COUPLE ONCE: YOU MOAN ABOUT THEM FOR, LIKE, A YEAR...YOU NEVER SLEEP RIGHT. AND SUDDENLY, YOU WAKE UP ONE DAY AND REALIZE THE PAIN WENT AWAY.

FORGET YOUR UMBRELLA?
DON'T OWN ONE. I LIKE GETTING WET.
MM-HMM... THAT'S PRETTY TYPICAL. STILL GOING TO YOUR AA MEETINGS?
OH, GOD... YOU SOUND LIKE NEIL. HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED I'M DRINKING COKE?

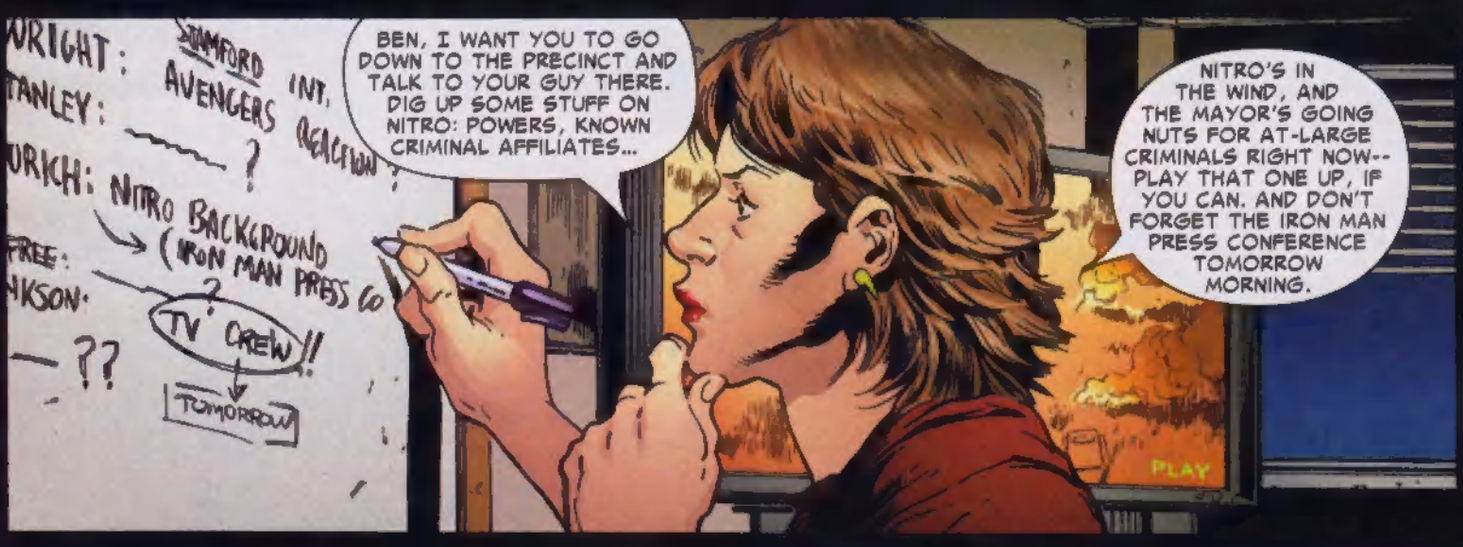
I CAN NEVER TELL WITH YOU, SALLY. YOU DON'T NEED BOOZE TO BE MORBID.
GOD, YOU GOTTA LOVE THIS, THOUGH, DON'T YOU? THE ONLY TIME WE EVER GET TOGETHER LIKE THIS IS WHEN SOMEONE DIES.
AT LEAST WE GOT TO WEAR FUNNY HATS. JOHNNY FERNANDEZ WOULD'VE LIKED THAT.

YOU KNOW THIS THING WITH THE SUPERHUMAN REGISTRATION ACT IS GOING TO HAPPEN, DON'T YOU?

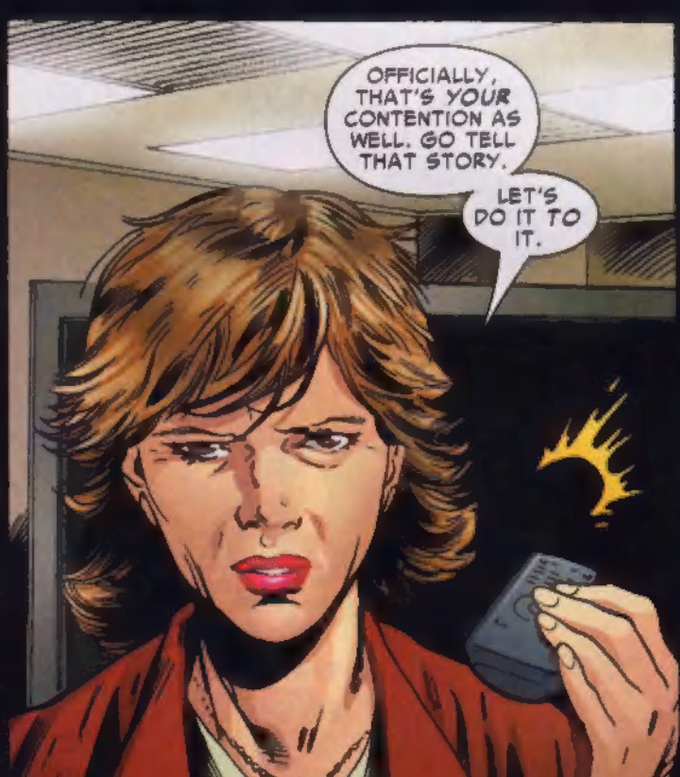
I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT JUST YET, BEN. BUT I DON'T THINK ANYONE AT THE WHITE HOUSE COULD HAVE SCRIPTED THIS NITRO THING ANY BETTER.
A SCHOOL FULL OF KIDS WIPED OUT IN A PUNCH-UP INVOLVING UNTRAINED, UNSUPERVISED, UNDERAGED SUPER HEROES.
HOW'S JONAH TAKING IT?
LIKE HE WON THE LOTTERY.
OH, GOD...I CAN JUST IMAGINE: "LAYDEEZ AND GENTLEMEN...IN THE RED CORNER, THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION.
"IN THE BLUE CORNER, THE UNSTOPPABLE TAG-TEAM OF DISINFORMATION AND PARANOIA, WINNER BY TWO FALLS AND A SUBMISSION."
HEHH...THAT'S THE BUGLE, ALL RIGHT. WHAT DID THEY GIVE YOU AT THE ALTERNATIVE?
CARTE BLANCHE TO WRITE ABOUT THE EROSION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES IN AMERICA. AND CAN I LINK IT TO THE WIRETAPPING THING, IF I WOULD BE SO KIND? YOU?
JONAH SAID, AND I QUOTE: "LET'S SHOVE THIS SO FAR UP THE LIBERALS' KEISTERS THEY THINK THE WEDNESDAY SPORTS PAGE IS THE SUNDAY EDITION."
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, EXACTLY?
I HAVE NO IDEA. HE WAS ON A ROLL.
WELL, THEN...TO BATTLE, AND MAY THE BEST HACK WIN. I LIKE MY CHANCES. NO ONE WANTS THE GOVERNMENT TO INSTITUTE A DRAFT.
THIS IS DIFFERENT, SALLY--JUST FOR A CHANGE, I THINK JONAH MAY BE RIGHT.
THE TIMING IS PERFECT TO PUSH FOR SUPER-HERO FEDERALIZATION. THIS REGISTRATION ACT IS GOING TO MEET LITTLE OR NO OPPOSITION AFTER THE DISASTER IN STAMFORD.
IF IT PASSES, EVERYTHING CHANGES.

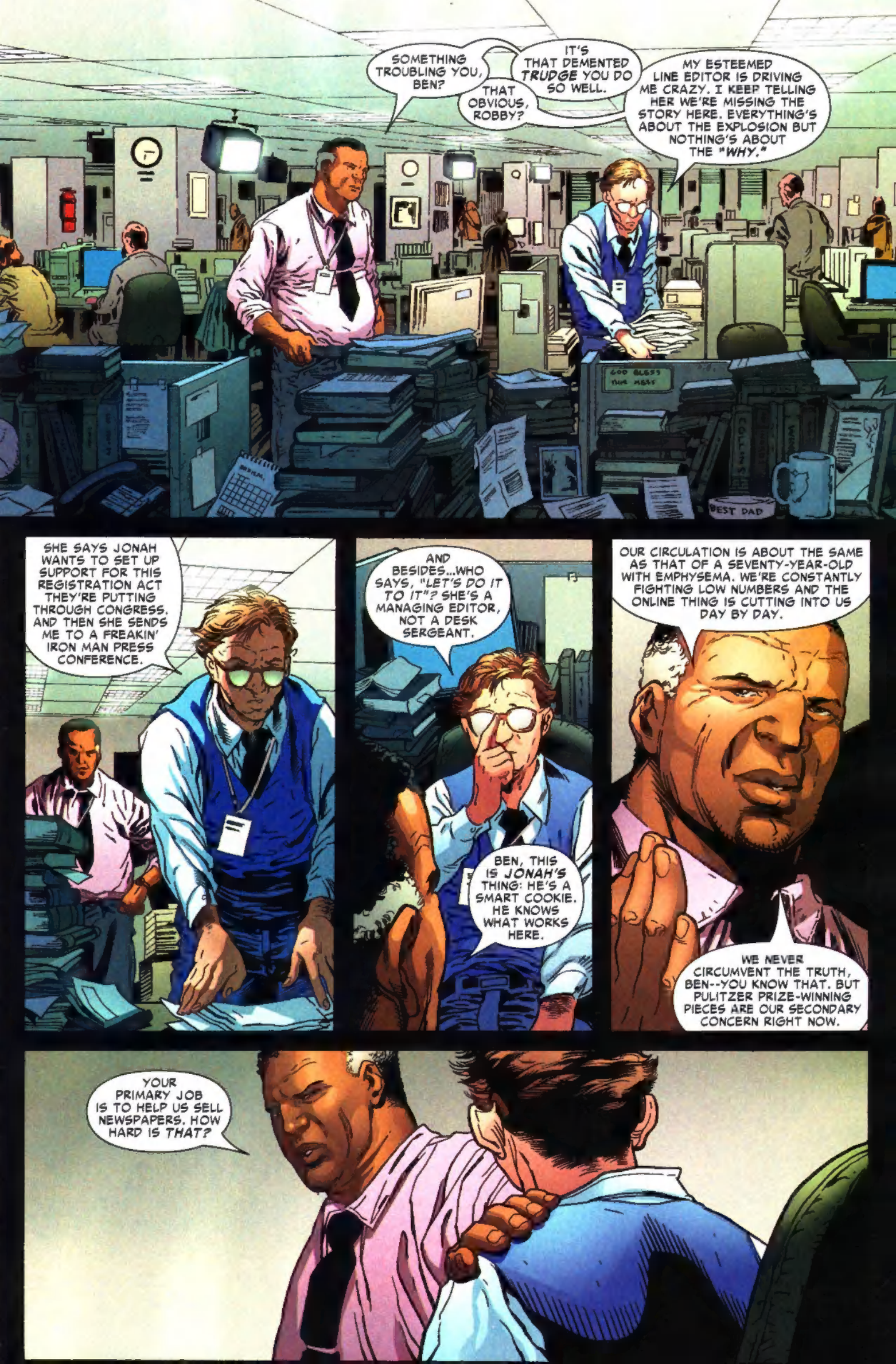
BEN WAS PROBABLY RIGHT: THIS WAS PUT INTO MOTION THE DAY SOME ANGRY EXTREMISTS DECIDED TO FLY A COUPLE OF PLANES INTO SOME TALL BUILDINGS IN MANHATTAN.
WE JUMPED INTO FIGHTING MODE THEN, AND WE WERE READY TO DO IT AGAIN NOW.
ALL OF A SUDDEN, JOURNALISM WAS GOING TO TAKE A BACKSEAT TO JINGOISM, AND THE FIGHT FOR A NATION'S SENTIMENT WOULD BE ON.
THIS WAS CIVIL LIBERTY VERSUS CIVIL COMFORT; WIRETAPPING VERSUS TERRORISM; FOX VERSUS CNN.
IT WAS ME IN MY LITTLE CORNER OF HECK, READY TO TELL THE WORLD ABOUT THE INJUSTICE OF THE REGISTRATION ACT.
IT WAS GOOD OLD BEN URICH--BEST NEWS REPORTER I EVER MET--GOING TO BAT FOR HIS PUBLISHER ON THE PREMISE THAT THE ACT WAS CLEAN AND ANYONE WHO DISOBEYED IT WAS A DIRTY LITTLE MONKEY.
THE SAD THING WAS, JONAH JAMESON--PUBLISHER OF THE RIGHT-WING NEW YORK TOILET-RAG KNOWN AS THE *DAILY BUGLE*--KNEW BETTER THAN ANYONE THE WAY THIS WAS GOING TO GO.
NOTHING SELLS NEWSPAPERS LIKE A GOOD, OLD-FASHIONED *DISASTER.*

THE DAILY BUGLE NEWSROOM. ASSIGNMENTS MEETING.
HOSKINS: STAMFORD INT.
WRIGHT: - AVENGERS REACTION?
STANLEY: —?
URICH: NITRO BACKGROUND
DUPREE: —?
DINKSON: TV CREW!
—??
...AND DUKE, WE'LL PROBABLY HAVE YOU FOLLOW UP WITH THE STAMFORD KIDS' FAMILIES: RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION, THE INJUSTICE OF IT ALL, SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
TRY TO SKEW IT AWAY FROM THE FUNERALS, THOUGH. WE DON'T WANT TO MAKE OUR READERS MISERABLE OVER THEIR CORNFLAKES.
PIZZA


WRIGHT: STAMFORD INT. AVENGERS REACTION?
STANLEY: —?
URICH: NITRO BACKGROUND (IRON MAN PRESS CO
DUPREE: —?
DINKSON: TV CREW!!
—??
TOMORROW
BEN, I WANT YOU TO GO DOWN TO THE PRECINCT AND TALK TO YOUR GUY THERE. DIG UP SOME STUFF ON NITRO: POWERS, KNOWN CRIMINAL AFFILIATES...
NITRO'S IN THE WIND, AND THE MAYOR'S GOING NUTS FOR AT-LARGE CRIMINALS RIGHT NOW--PLAY THAT ONE UP, IF YOU CAN. AND DON'T FORGET THE IRON MAN PRESS CONFERENCE TOMORROW MORNING.
PLAY

THIS IS BIG, PEOPLE: THERE'S *MILEAGE* IN THIS. JONAH'S GOING ALL OUT WITH THE P.R. GUYS FOR A SPOT ON THE O'REILLY SHOW TONIGHT.
IT'S HIS CONTENTION THAT AMERICA'S SECURITY JUST CAME UNDER ATTACK FROM AN OUT-OF-CONTROL PACK OF COSTUMED FREAKS.
NYCFD
SONYA


OFFICIALLY, THAT'S *YOUR* CONTENTION AS WELL. GO TELL THAT STORY.
LET'S DO IT TO IT.


SOMETHING TROUBLING YOU, BEN?
THAT OBVIOUS, ROBBY?
IT'S THAT DEMENTED *TRUDGE* YOU DO SO WELL.
MY ESTEEMED LINE EDITOR IS DRIVING ME CRAZY. I KEEP TELLING HER WE'RE MISSING THE STORY HERE. EVERYTHING'S ABOUT THE EXPLOSION BUT NOTHING'S ABOUT THE *"WHY."*
SHE SAYS JONAH WANTS TO SET UP SUPPORT FOR THIS REGISTRATION ACT THEY'RE PUTTING THROUGH CONGRESS. AND THEN SHE SENDS ME TO A FREAKIN' IRON MAN PRESS CONFERENCE.
AND BESIDES...WHO SAYS, *"LET'S DO IT TO IT"?* SHE'S A MANAGING EDITOR, NOT A DESK SERGEANT.
BEN, THIS IS *JONAH'S* THING: HE'S A SMART COOKIE. HE KNOWS WHAT WORKS HERE.
OUR CIRCULATION IS ABOUT THE SAME AS THAT OF A SEVENTY-YEAR-OLD WITH EMPHYSEMA. WE'RE CONSTANTLY FIGHTING LOW NUMBERS AND THE ONLINE THING IS CUTTING INTO US DAY BY DAY.
WE NEVER CIRCUMVENT THE TRUTH, BEN--YOU KNOW THAT. BUT PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING PIECES ARE OUR SECONDARY CONCERN RIGHT NOW.
YOUR PRIMARY JOB IS TO HELP US SELL NEWSPAPERS. HOW HARD IS *THAT?*

...A NUMBER OF THINGS TO CLEAR UP ON YOUR COMPANY MEDICAL FORM MRS. FLOYD... PLEASE CALL DOCTOR MADDEN'S OFFICE AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE.
KLIK
01:15
YEAH...HEY, SALLY--THIS IS ERIC! I'LL BE YOUR SPONSOR FOR THIS EVENING... HA HA! I WAS WONDERING IF WE'RE ON FOR FRIDAY...I MEAN, IF YOU STILL WANT TO. CALL ME!
KLIK
SALLY, THIS IS NEIL: CAN YOU CALL ME ABOUT THIS HAVOK THING? I'M STILL MISSING COPY--
KLIK
HELLO, SALLY.
I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU--
AAAH! AAAAAH!
NO, WAIT...CHILL OUT! EVERYTHING'S COOL. IT'S ME...SPIDER-MAN!
HOW DO I KNOW THAT? WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR COSTUME? AND HOW THE HELL DID YOU GET IN?
YOU LEFT THE FRONT DOOR OPEN! I DON'T ALWAYS COME IN THROUGH THE WINDOW!
OWW! HEY!

YOU STUPID IDIOT! YOU SCARED THE HELL OUT OF ME! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE PLAYING AT, COMING INTO SOMEONE'S HOUSE LIKE THAT? DON'T YOU PEOPLE KNOW HOW TO KNOCK?
WHAT, LIKE I SHOULD WAIT AROUND IN A HALLWAY? I'M KINDA HIGH-PROFILE RIGHT NOW, LADY!
JEEZ...OKAY, I GET IT. FINE. YOU'RE NOT IN THE MOOD--
NO, WAIT!
OH, GOD...
...AH-HEHH... HUHH...
...I'M SORRY, OKAY? THE COSTUME THREW ME. I'M KINDA EDGY RIGHT NOW AFTER THAT BUSINESS WITH THE GHOUL. YOU DO READ NEWSPAPERS, I TAKE IT?
LOOK...I'M SORRY-- IT'S MY FAULT. WORD IS YOU LIKE DRAMATIC ENTRANCES.
YOU'RE RIGHT: I'M AN IDIOT. I WAS JUST TRYING TO BE SPOOKY.
OKAY. I MEAN, REALLY-- I'M FINE. YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW LONG I'VE WAITED FOR A CHANCE TO TALK TO YOU, SPIDER-MAN.
YEAH, WELL... THE OTHER WORD IS, YOU'RE ONE OF ABOUT THREE JOURNALISTS WHO CAN BE TRUSTED IN THIS GAME TO TELL IT LIKE IT IS. I READ YOUR BIT ABOUT MARROW--THAT WAS PRETTY FAIR.
SO HERE IT IS: YOUR BIG CHANCE. ONE-TIME ONLY.
SPIDEY TELLS ALL.

AH, WHAT THE HECK...SOBRIETY CAN WAIT ANOTHER DAY. YOU WANT ONE?
I DON'T DRINK. SOMEONE MIGHT TAG [redacted] FOR SWINGING UNDER THE INFLUENCE.
NEVER STOPPED ME.
HUHH...HEHH...YOU LOOK KIND OF DORKY IN THAT CHAIR. IT'S CUTE.
I DON'T LIKE CHAIRS. WORST THING YOU CAN [redacted] TO [redacted] HYPERACTIVE [redacted].
MM. WELL, THE TAPE RECORDER WON'T PICK YOU UP ON THE CEILING. BESIDES, THIS WAS YOUR IDEA.
TRY NOT TO [redacted] THE TABLE TOO MUCH--IT SHOWS UP ON THE TAPE.
SURE...LOOK... I DON'T HAVE [redacted] LOT OF TIME, SALLY. I'VE GOT PLACES TO GO [redacted] PEOPLE TO PUNCH--
AND YET [redacted] YOU ARE, TAKING TIME OUT OF YOUR BUSY VIGILANTE SCHEDULE TO TALK WITH LITTLE OLD ME.
SO WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT YOU SUDDENLY WANT TO TELL THE WORLD?
I'VE NEVER TOLD THEM WHO I AM.

LITERALLY OR FIGURATIVELY?
BOTH. NO [redacted] KNOWS ME. THEY HAVE NO IDEA.
BEEN THINKING [redacted] LOT LATELY ABOUT WHAT WOULD [redacted] IF [redacted] DID... *TELL* PEOPLE, [redacted] MEAN.
SO FAR, I'VE MANAGED TO SKIRT AROUND THE LEGAL ASPECT OF WHAT [redacted] DO. I MEAN, YOU KNOW I'VE [redacted] DONE HALF THE BAD THINGS CERTAIN PEOPLE [redacted] ME CREDIT FOR.
THERE'S GOING TO BE [redacted] LOT OF [redacted] ON [redacted] TO REVEAL MY IDENTITY--MORE NOW THAN EVER BEFORE. UP UNTIL NOW, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN, MORE OR LESS ON THE RIGHT [redacted] OF THE LAW.
[redacted] DON'T WANT TO BE ON THE WRONG SIDE IF THE ACT PASSES, BUT PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY'RE ASKING OF ME.
I KNOW YOU LOST YOUR LITTLE [redacted] LAST YEAR, SALLY. I [redacted] ABOUT IT, AN' THAT ARTICLE YOU DID BROKE MY HEART.
I'VE LOST PEOPLE TOO...DIRECTLY AS [redacted] RESULT OF WHAT [redacted] DO. PEOPLE I CARED ABOUT. I STILL *HAVE* PEOPLE.
[redacted] NOW THE GOVERNMENT WANTS ME TO REGISTER MY IDENTITY [redacted] GO TO JAIL.
DIDN'T IT OCCUR TO ANYONE WHAT THIS WOULD DO TO MY *FAMILY?*

WAIT...YOU WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW YOU HAVE FAMILY? ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT ME TO WRITE THAT DOWN?
YES, I AM. MAYBE IT'LL FORCE PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THE PRESSURE WE'RE UNDER IN THIS BUSINESS.
WE'RE HUSBANDS AND WIVES...FATHERS, MOTHERS, SONS AND DAUGHTERS. WE ALREADY SACRIFICE ENOUGH.
WHAT KIND OF SACRIFICE DO PEOPLE WANT? IF I SHOW MY FACE TO THE WORLD, ALL OF THE PEOPLE WHO HATE [redacted] WILL GO AFTER THE THINGS I HOLD MOST DEAR.
THE PEOPLE BEHIND THIS REGISTRATION ACT [redacted] GOING TO FORCE THIS INTO THE OPEN. THEY THINK THEY'RE DOING IT FOR A GOOD REASON--HECK, THEY PROBABLY *ARE*--BUT THERE'S A *COST*.
THAT'S ALL I WANT PEOPLE TO KNOW: JUST THINK ABOUT IT. ASK YOURSELF WHAT YOU WOULD DO IF YOU WERE [redacted] THE SAME POSITION.
I GOTTA GO, OKAY? AND FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, [redacted] MAKE IT A RULE NEVER TO LEAVE A PRETTY GIRL WITHOUT [redacted] HOT TIP:
GO TO IRON MAN'S PRESS CONFERENCE TOMORROW. YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU DID.

[redacted] MAN, HUH? [redacted] THIS, [redacted], INSIDER TRADING?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT. TRUST ME: YOU'LL WANT TO BE THERE FOR THIS ONE.
HA! HEHH... YOU'RE KINDA DORKY. I LIKE IT... IT'S REALLY CUTE.
YOU [redacted], IF YOU WANT TO COME BY AGAIN SOMETIME, I COOK A MEAN LASAGNA. [redacted] CAN [redacted] IT OFF THE RECORD--
YEAH, UH... THAT THING I SAID ABOUT FAMILY...
...ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WOULD BE MY *WIFE*.
WELL... *THIS* WAS AWKWARD--

YOU GET A HOT TIP LIKE THAT, YOU GO. AND SO I WENT.
TV FOX
FEELING LIKE A TOOL.
SPIDER-MAN [redacted] INSIDE MY APARTMENT FOR THREE MINUTES AND I JUST ABOUT JUMPED INSIDE HIS SPANDEX.
ALWAYS, I GOTTA GO FOR THE UN-ATTAINABLE ONES.
HEYA, MONI! HOW WAS IRAQ?
CRAPPY. HOW ARE THE RIBS?
CRAPPY. YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT?
I DUNNO... SOME AVENGERS THING, I GUESS.
PRESS
MUST [redacted] SOMETHING. FOX AND CNN BROUGHT OUT THE [redacted] GUNS.
YOU SEE WHAT LI'L MS. SUNSHINE IS WEARING?
MAYBE IRON MAN GOT A NEW COSTUME, OR SOMETHING. THEY LOVE TO MAKE A BIG DEAL OUT OF THINGS LIKE THAT. SPIDER-MAN SHOWED ME HIS LAST NIGHT.
SPIDER-MAN SHOWED YOU HIS WHAT--?
OOP. HERE WE GO...

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MEMBERS OF THE PRESS... ONE HOUR AGO I MET WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.
AMONGST THE ITEMS WE DISCUSSED WERE THE STAMFORD INCIDENT AND THE PROPOSED SUPER HERO REGISTRATION ACT CURRENTLY MAKING THE ROUNDS OF CONGRESS
AS YOU ALL KNOW, THERE HAS BEEN MUCH SPECULATION IN RECENT WEEKS OVER THE ACCELERATION OF THIS PROPOSED ACT. WE FIND OURSELVES AT THE CUSP OF AN HISTORIC MOMENT.
PRESS
IF THE ACT PASSES--AS EXPECTED--THEN ROUGHLY HALF OF THOSE CURRENTLY SERVING YOU AS PROTECTORS WILL BE IN VIOLATION OF THE LAW
PRESS
OVER THE YEARS I HAVE ALWAYS ENDEAVORED TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT FOR THE CITIZENS OF THIS COUNTRY. I HAVE ALWAYS--WITHOUT QUESTION OR HESITATION--BEEN YOUR SERVANT.
BUT AS I INFORMED THE PRESIDENT THIS MORNING, THE QUESTION OF THE MASK I [redacted] NAGGED AT MY CONSCIENCE SINCE THE DAY I PUT IT ON.
WHO EXACTLY AM I HIDING FROM: MY ENEMIES, OR MYSELF?

IN HIS SPEECH TO CONGRESS YESTERDAY, THE PRESIDENT SPOKE OF THE NEXT LOGICAL STEPS WE MUST TAKE TO ENSURE THE SECURITY OF ALL AMERICANS.
I HAVE MY OWN SERIES OF "STEPS" THAT I LONG AGO PROMISED MYSELF I WOULD TAKE.
PLEASE LOOK UP
WOW.
THESE ARE SOME OF THE MANY AUTOMATED SUITS I HAVE CONSTRUCTED OVER THE YEARS FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF PROTECTING MY IDENTITY.
I DID THIS IN ORDER TO PRETEND I COULD BE IN TWO PLACES AT ONCE.
IN OTHER WORDS, I LIED.

IRON MAN, ISN'T THERE HYPOCRISY IN CALLING [redacted] SUPPORT OF THE REGISTRATION ACT, YET CONTINUING TO KEEP YOUR IDENTITY A SECRET?
ABC NEWS PRESS
SOME MIGHT SUGGEST YOU'RE CURRYING FAVOR WITH THE INCUMBENT PRESIDENT IN [redacted] TO MAINTAIN A CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP.
THE REGISTRATION ACT DOES NOT SPECIFICALLY CALL FOR PERSONS TO REVEAL THEIR IDENTITY PUBLICLY; MERELY TO REGISTER WITH AUTHORITIES FOR THE PURPOSES OF IDENTIFICATION.
BUT FOR MYSELF, IF I SUPPORT THE ACT, SOME WILL CALL ME A HYPOCRITE. SOME MIGHT SAY I CAN NEVER [redacted] TRULY HONEST UNLESS I SHOW MY FACE TO THE WORLD.
AND THEY'D BE RIGHT
DID HE JUST SAY WHAT I THOUGHT HE SAID?
I'VE DONE THIS BEFORE. BUT ALWAYS WITH A CLEVER TAKE-BACK, [redacted] WAY OF ONCE MORE OBSCURING THE ISSUE.
BUT, TODAY I'M GOING TO COME CLEAN WITH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, AS I SHOULD HAVE DONE FROM DAY ONE.
I CAN THINK OF ONLY ONE WAY TO MAKE YOU ALL UNDERSTAND WHY
KSSSSH

EMBEDDED PART ONE

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I'M TELLIN' YOU, PETE...IT WAS RIGHT ABOUT HERE. CAME THROUGH THE AIR LIKE A DAMN MISSILE [redacted] SOMETHIN'--IT WAS ONLY ABOUT FIFTEEN OR TWENTY FEET [redacted] THE FARMHOUSE, BY THE SOUND OF IT.
I AIN'T NEVER [redacted] NOTHIN' LIKE IT!

ALBIE, YOU'RE ALWAYS HEARING SOMETHING OUT [redacted] I SWEAR...
+HUFF+ HEHH...
...IF THIS IS [redacted] ONE OF YOUR ALIEN SPACESHIP ENCOUNTERS, I'M GONNA TAKE YOU BACK TO THE STATION, SOBER OR CLEAN!

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I TOLD YOU I HEARD SOMETHIN'--
DISPATCH...THIS IS TEN-ADAM-CHARLIE: I'M GONNA NEED BACKUP AND MEDICAL TEAMS TO THE NORTH WHEAT FIELD UP BY ALBIE JOHNSON'S FARM.
WE GOT A POSSIBLE LIGHT AIRCRAFT DOWN OVER HERE. I AM PROCEEDING TO INVESTIGATE. OVER.
NOW YOU JUST WAIT BACK HERE, ALBIE. IF THIS [redacted] ANYTHING, I DON'T WANT YOU GETTING YOURSELF HURT.
[redacted] YOU NUTS? I AIN'T LETTIN' YOU DISCOVER 'EM BY YOURSELF! THIS IS MY LAND!
IT'S NOT ALIENS, YOU IDIOT.
OH, YEAH? YOU THINK [redacted] LIGHT PLANE COULD DO THIS MUCH DAMAGE?
MAYBE.
SO WHAT'S WITH THE GUN?
IT'S JUST FOR SAFETY--
HEY! YOU SEE THAT?

THE ACCUSED

PART ONE

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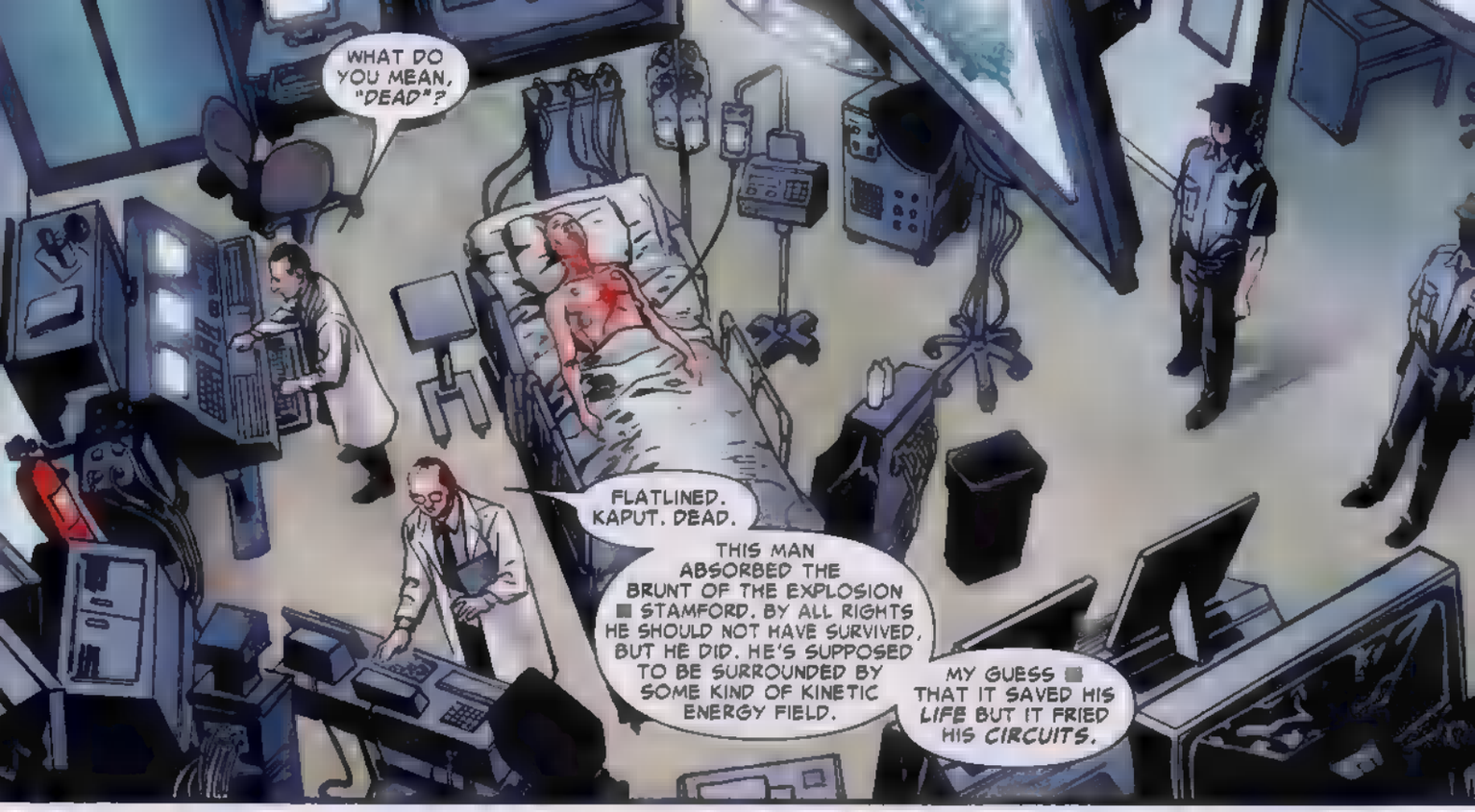
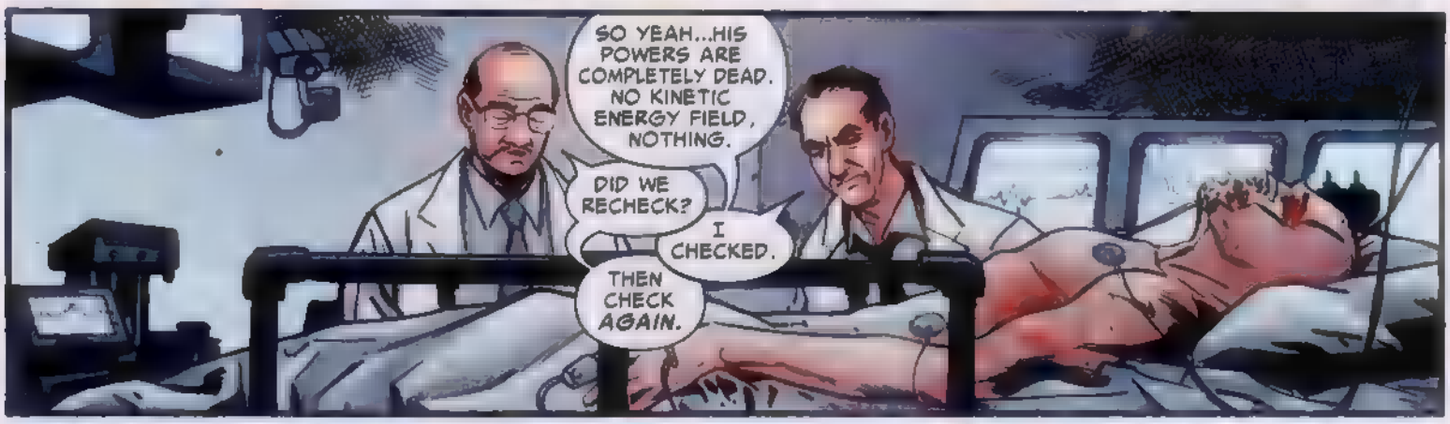
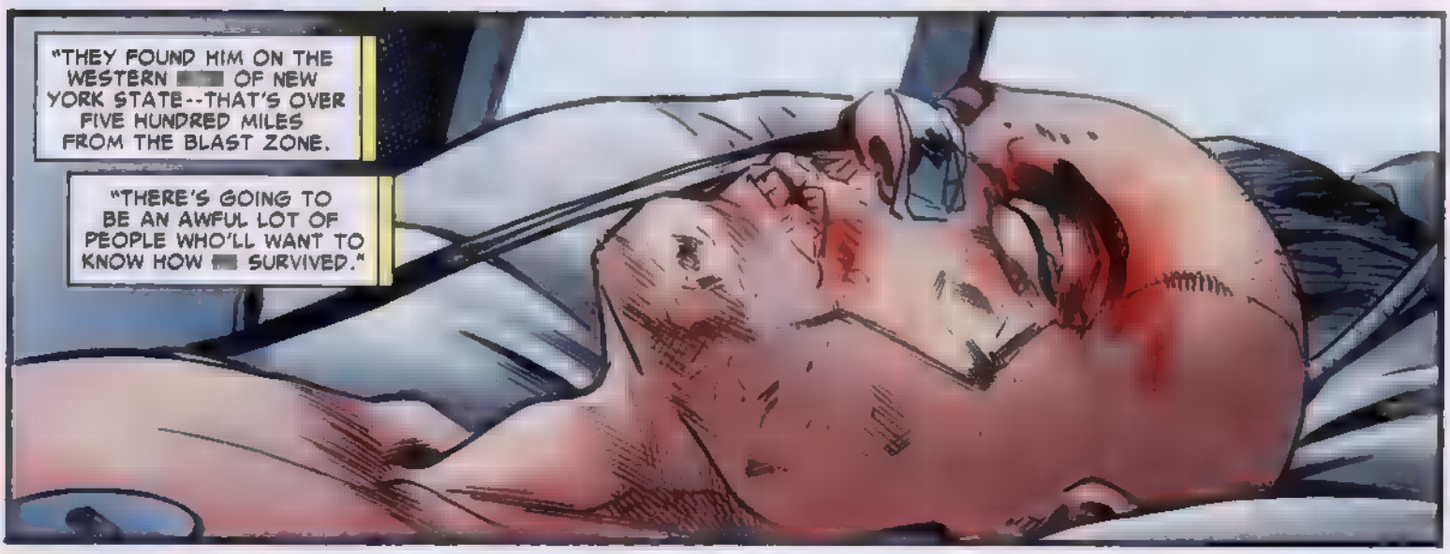
HMMMMMM
WHAT IS THAT THING? WHAT IS IT?
AN' WHAT THE HECK IS THAT NOISE?
I DON'T KNOW! KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN!
...MNHM...
HMMMMMM
HMMMMM
AW, JEEZ... THAT'S ONE OF THEM NEW WARRIORS!
WHATSISNAME... SPEEDBALL!

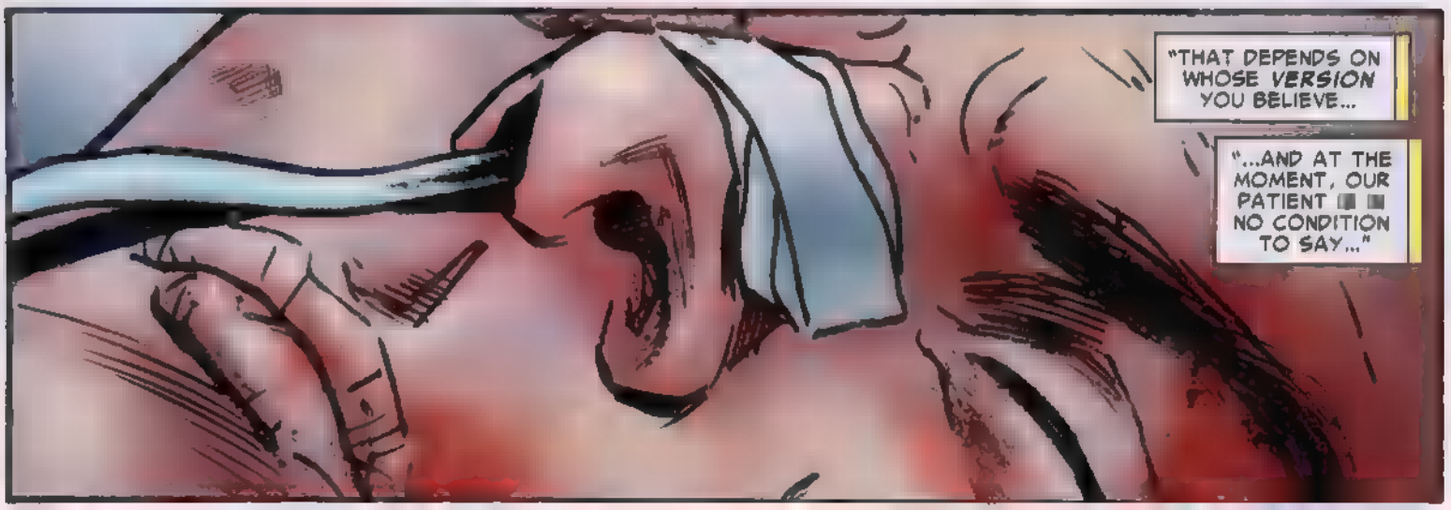
IS HE OKAY? DO YOU KNOW CPR?
OF COURSE I KNOW CPR, DINGBAT! I'M A POLICE OFFICER!
WAIT... PETEY, WAIT!
LOOKIT THAT!
LORD, PETE...HE AIN'T EVEN TOUCHIN' THE GROUND!
HMMMMM
HMMMMMMMMMMMMM
KESH
KESH
WHAT THE--?
SKREEEE

HMMM--
THUD
"SPEEDBALL IS DEAD."


WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "DEAD"?
FLATLINED. KAPUT. DEAD.
THIS MAN ABSORBED THE BRUNT OF THE EXPLOSION ■ STAMFORD. BY ALL RIGHTS HE SHOULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED, BUT HE DID. HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE SURROUNDED BY SOME KIND OF KINETIC ENERGY FIELD.
MY GUESS ■ THAT IT SAVED HIS LIFE BUT IT FRIED HIS CIRCUITS.


SO YEAH...HIS POWERS ARE COMPLETELY DEAD. NO KINETIC ENERGY FIELD, NOTHING.
DID WE RECHECK?
I CHECKED.
THEN CHECK AGAIN.


"THEY FOUND HIM ON THE WESTERN ■■■ OF NEW YORK STATE--THAT'S OVER FIVE HUNDRED MILES FROM THE BLAST ZONE.
"THERE'S GOING TO BE AN AWFUL LOT OF PEOPLE WHO'LL WANT TO KNOW HOW ■■ SURVIVED."


"THAT DEPENDS ON WHOSE VERSION YOU BELIEVE...
"...AND AT THE MOMENT, OUR PATIENT ■ ■ NO CONDITION TO SAY..."

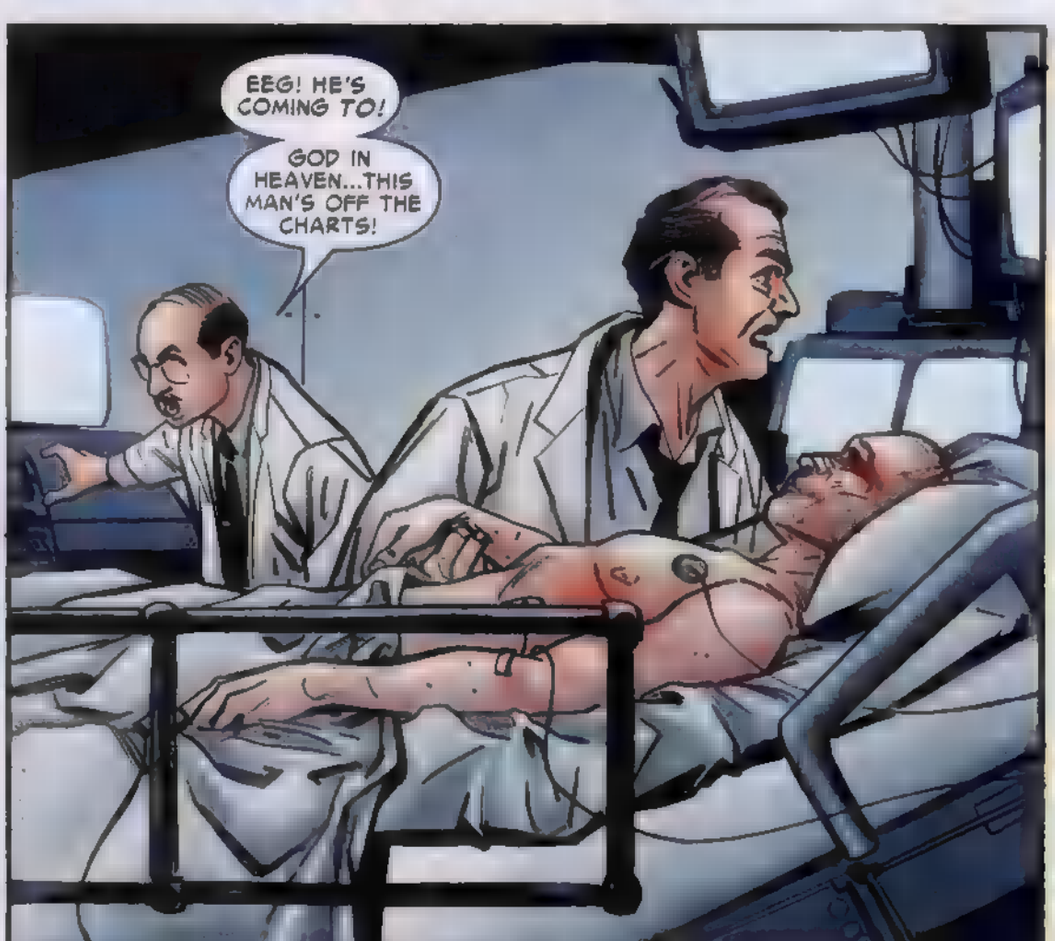
OKAY, HOW MANY SUPER-VILLAINS ARE WE TALKING HERE, SPEEDBALL?
THREE. NO WAIT. I THINK I SEE COLDHEART IN THE BACKYARD EMPTYING THE TRASH...

...WE'VE BEEN MARKED!
I'D *HEARD* THAT THE CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN, SPEEDFREEK...
ON YOUR *FEET*, NITRO. AND DON'T TRY ANY OF YOUR STUPID EXPLOSIONS...
NAMORITA, RIGHT? WELL, I'M AFRAID [redacted] NOT THE BARGAIN BASEMENT LOSERS YOU GUYS [redacted] *USED* TO, BABY.

FOOOOM!

...TERRIBLE. JUST TERRIBLE. ALL THOSE CHILDREN. THEY COULDN'T EVEN WORK FROM DENTAL RECORDS TO GET AN ACCURATE BODY COUNT--
MUUUNHH

JOHN! WE'VE GOT A SPIKE!
WHAT? WHAT KIND?


EEG! HE'S COMING TO!
GOD IN HEAVEN...THIS MAN'S OFF THE CHARTS!

SECURITY! GET SOMEONE IN HERE! NOW!

GOOD AFTERNOON, SPEEDBALL, OR SHOULD I SAY, MR. BALDWIN?
MY NAME IS ERIC MARSHALL--I'M ATTACHED TO S.H.I.E.L.D.'S ANTI-REGISTRATION TERRORIST VIOLATION SQUAD VIA THE N.S.A.
I HOPE YOU'RE NOT IN ANY WAY ATTACHED TO THE NUMBER FOUR. BECAUSE I HAVE FOUR PIECES OF BAD NEWS FOR YOU.
ONE: I'M AFRAID YOUR FRIENDS WERE CAUGHT WITH YOU IN AN EXPLOSION IN STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT.
YOU ARE THE ONLY SURVIVOR OF THAT INCIDENT. EVERY OTHER NEW WARRIOR IS DEAD.
TWO: THE EXPLOSION ALSO KILLED SOMEWHERE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF SIX HUNDRED AND TWELVE STAMFORD RESIDENTS.
AT LEAST SIXTY OF THOSE VICTIMS WERE SCHOOLCHILDREN.

UHH...WHU..?
WHE' M'I..?
THREE: THE RESULTANT BLAST REACTED WITH YOUR KINETIC ENERGY FIELD AND BOUNCED YOU ACROSS HALF A STATE. YOU [redacted] DISCOVERED LAST NIGHT IN A WHEAT FIELD IN [redacted] YORK.

BUT YOU ABSORBED THE BRUNT OF THE EXPLOSION. THANKS TO YOUR KINETIC POWERS, THE TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF RELEASED ENERGY WAS TRANSFERRED TO YOUR BODY.
[redacted] BELIEVE THE SERIES OF UNIQUE SYNAPTIC AND NERVE-ENDING CONNECTIONS THAT ALLOWED YOU ACCESS TO YOUR ABILITIES [redacted] BURNED-OUT AS A RESULT OF THIS.
SO THAT YOU ARE NOW *POWERLESS.*

AND FOUR: YOU'RE UNDER *ARREST.*
SHIELD
TO BE CONTINUED

In 1942, concerned by a possible invasion of the West Coast, the President of the United States signed Executive Order 9066, precipitating one of the largest controlled migrations in history. Over 110,000 people of Japanese descent were moved from their homes near the Pacific Coast into 10 wartime communities under the jurisdiction of the Wartime Relocation Authority.

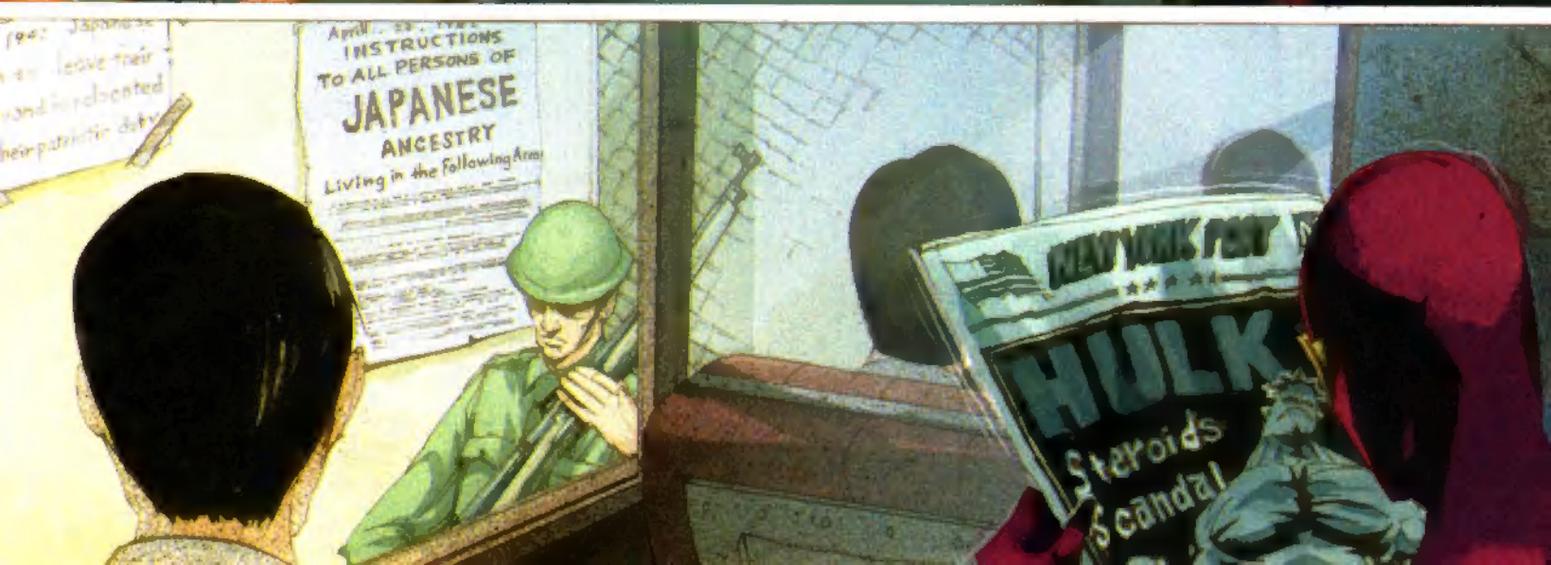
Most of these people were American Citizens of Japanese ancestry with little or no allegiance to the Japanese Emperor. Over half were children. They were forced to leave behind over two hundred million dollars' worth of real estate and possessions, though a later law permitted some of these people to renounce their citizenship and return to their former homes.

In the interests of fairness, it can be noted that while they provided very sparse accommodation, these relocation centers had the highest live-birth rate and the lowest death rate in wartime United States. The Japanese in the centers received free food, lodging, medical and dental care, clothing allowance, education, hospital care, and all basic necessities. The government even paid travel expenses and assisted in cases of emergency relief.

The following poem--written anonymously--was circulated at Poston War Relocation Camp during the summer of 1943.

PAUL JENKINS	KEI KOBAYASHI	CHRISTINA STRAIN	VC'S RANDY GENTILE	CORY SEDLMEIER	TOM BREVOORT	JOE QUESADA	DAN BUCKLEY
WRITER	ARTIST	COLORIST	LETTERER	EDITOR	EXECUTIVE EDITOR	EDITOR IN CHIEF	PUBLISHER

They've sunk the posts deep into the ground
They've strung out wires all the way around.
With machine gun nests just over there,
And sentries and soldiers everywhere.
Imprisoned in here for a long, long time,
We know we're punished--though we've committed no crime,
Our thoughts are gloomy and enthusiasm damp,
To be locked up in a concentration camp.
YEAH... HI, IT'S ME.
NOTHING. NO, NO PROBLEM.



Loyalty we know, and patriotism we feel,
To sacrifice our utmost was our ideal,
To fight for our country, and die, perhaps;
But we're here because we happen to be Japs.
DADDY... WHEN CAN WE GO HOME?
THIS IS OUR HOME, KIMIKO.
I DON'T LIKE IT HERE.
HUSH NOW, DARLING. YOU'LL FRIGHTEN MOMMY.
We all love life, and our country best,
Our misfortune to be here in the West,
To keep us penned behind that damned fence,
Is someone's notion of national defense.

YOU MUST PROMISE TO BE A GOOD GIRL, KIMIKO. WE ARE ALL GOING TO HAVE TO DO THE BEST WE CAN.
DID WE DO SOMETHING WRONG?

IT'S JUST FOR A FEW WEEKS. WHILE THE WAR IS ON. THEY HAVE GIVEN US HOUSING. YOU SEE?
WHY CAN'T WE BE IN SAN FRANCISCO?
WE ARE HELPING THE WAR EFFORT.
WHY?

BECAUSE IT IS OUR *DUTY*.
BECAUSE WE ARE AMERICANS.
...WITH GREAT POWER, HUH?

Team DCP
A World of Possibilities
Within our Grasp
Lightray
KaiserSoze